

Littleton Independent

Arts group notches 50 years

The Depot Arts Center is in Littleton
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On April 10, members of Littleton's Fine Arts Guild hosted an elegant tea party for about 15 of its longstanding members (some in their 90s) and former members to celebrate the group's 50th anniversary.

Guests brought up memories by leafing through two huge scrapbooks filled with clippings and notes about the group's past.

On April 14, the guild hosted a public reception with food and music to celebrate again in the 1888 red depot.

Longtime and former Littleton Fine Arts Guild members were invited to a special tea at the Depot Art Center to celebrate the guild. Guests included Rich and Addie Voils (Rich was the first man to join); Doug and Sheila Carter; "Skippy" Haggerty; Meredith Willson; Marge McMonagle; Rita Bently; Ellen Gerstung; Maxie Taylor; Marilyn Thompson, Betty Carr; Faye Hershey; Judy Deist; Kathy Calkins; and this reporter, a former member, among those who started painting with the group at the Littleton Grange, as did a number of these guests. Pat Dall organized the event, assisted by members Pat Spelic, Sue Williams, Anna Marie Lininng and Lynette Wilson.



A bit about that history:

Mrs. Leonard Hayes of Littleton put an ad in the local paper to see if there were any folks out there interested in painting as she was. Ten women responded and the Pioneer Art Club was born. They paid \$1 a month to hire an instructor and buy donuts and coffee. Those who could stay all day brought sack lunches. No children were allowed, according to a handout from the guild's Depot Arts Center.

Membership quickly grew to 25, and by 1964 there were 50 and the roster was limited to 50 active members.

The club's purposes were to provide a weekly painting session with a qualified instructor; foster individuality and interest in fine art; and sponsor periodic exhibits.

In 1966 the name was changed to Littleton Art Club and in 1967 to Littleton Fine Arts Guild. In 1967, the group also moved out of Mrs. Hayes' basement to the Littleton Grange at East Orchard and South University and began to hold a Spring Show at Bemis Library and exhibits in banks, clinics and businesses.

About the Depot:

Built in 1888 by the Santa Fe Railroad, it was located just east of the tracks, north of Littleton Boulevard, facing the Rio Grande Depot, which now, in its new location, serves as the light rail's Downtown Littleton Station.

In 1965, the railroad planned to tear it down, but Edwin A. Bemis, publisher emeritus of the Littleton Independent and vice president of the Littleton Area Historical Society, arranged for the railroad to give the depot to the City of Littleton.

Active Littleton native Varian Ashbaugh supervised moving the building to Bega Park (then called Rio Grande Park), where it stayed until 1973.

Designated a historic landmark, it was moved to its present site in 1973 and efforts began to restore it for community use, aided by a large committee. In 1974, the Littleton Friends of the Library/Museum applied for a \$10,000 grant to be matched by local funds, and with great effort by guild members and families, the depot opened as a gallery on June 19, 1977.

Members volunteer to operate it today and the city maintains the building.

Readers who haven't visited here are missing a local treasure.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. 303-795-0781.